# First Annual Report

1 July 2004 –
31 March 2005

Campus Alberta
Quality Council

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# CAMPUS ALBERTA QUALITY COUNCIL

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30 June 2005

Honourable Mr. David Hancock
Minister of Advanced Education
Room 204, Legislature Building
Edmonton, AB T5K 2B6

Dear Mr. Hancock:

On behalf of the Campus Alberta Quality Council, I have the honour of providing you with the first Annual Report for the period from 1 July 2004 to 31 March 2005.

Sincerely,

Doug Owram
Chair

# 1. Introduction

On 18 March 2004, the proclamation of the new *Post-secondary Learning Act* enabled the Minister to establish the Campus Alberta Quality Council (CAQC). The Council is an arms-length quality assurance agency created to make recommendations to the Minister of Advanced Education on applications from post-secondary institutions wishing to offer new degree programs in Alberta under the terms of the *Act* and the *Approval of Programs of Study Regulation (51/2004).* Other than degrees in divinity, all degree programs offered in Alberta, including degrees offered by non-resident institutions, must be approved by the government.

In announcing Council's founding members in July 2004, Minister Dr. Lyle Oberg noted that "The *Post-secondary Learning Act* has opened the door to new degree-completion opportunities and greater flexibility for institutions to respond to student needs. The work of the Council will ensure that new degree programs are of the high quality Albertans have come to expect of their post-secondary institutions."

# 2. Activities of the Council

2004-05 was the first year of operation of the Council. Council held its organizational meeting on 17-18 September, and in the six months since then, it has met twice.

Overall, the Council has focused on three major areas of activity:

1. establishment of operating principles, procedures and assessment practices;

2. communication to stakeholders within the province and to relevant national bodies of the role of the Council; and

3. conducting initial evaluations of programs.

Each of these will be discussed in turn.

## *Establishment of Operating Principles and Procedures*

The Council is fortunate to have benefited from the legacy left by its predecessor, the Private Colleges Accreditation Board (PCAB), in operation for twenty years before finishing its work in June 2004. As the first provincial quality assurance agency in Canada for degree programs offered by private institutions, the PCAB's reputation and high standards have set the stage for the continuing quality assessment work of the Council.

Beginning with the principles recommended by PCAB and those recommended by international bodies, Council formally adopted its operating principles on 13 December 2004 (see Appendix 2). Of particular importance is its first principle, that Council adopt assessment standards that are recognized nationally and internationally.

In moving from principles to standards, the CAQC benefited from the work in Spring of 2004 of representatives from the quality assurance agencies in Alberta (PCAB), British Columbia (DQAB) and Ontario (PEQAB). These three bodies compared organizational and program assessment standards. Those standards which were common to the three organizations became the starting point for developing the Council's assessment standards.

PCAB's *Accreditation Handbook,* containing that Board's standard and assessment practices and guidelines, provided an interim basis for Council's operations with respect to baccalaureate degree proposals. However, Council's mandate gives it responsibility for a much wider range of activities. In effect, all new degree programs, whether applied baccalaureate, baccalaureate, or graduate, fall within the Council's responsibility. The scope of this responsibility has meant that the PCAB material was only a starting point. Over the past months, Council has been establishing assessment materials appropriate to its mandate. Specifically, Council has developed the following documentation:

- operating principles;
- organizational assessment standards – general and graduate; and
- program assessment standards (including those for applied degrees).

As well, Council now has a website (www.caqc.gov.ab.ca) that allows stakeholders easy access to Council's documents and activities.

Over the coming year Council will complete the documentation of its assessment standards and guidelines. As Council continues to assess new degree programs, experience will lead to modification and improvement of existing assessment materials.

### *Communication with Stakeholders*

The creation of the Council and the opportunities under the new *Act* for the establishment of degree programs in public colleges and technical institutes has aroused considerable interest across the post-secondary system. In response, the Chair and Director of the CAQC Secretariat have met extensively with institutions and other stakeholders to explain the Council's principles and procedures and to seek input on the best ways in which to serve the interests of the post-secondary system and its learners. There have also been several meetings with Advanced Education officials to ensure that the department's system coordination review and the Council's quality assessment mandate are coordinated as well as possible.

Over the course of the past several months, in addition to individual meetings with officials from Alliance University College, Grant MacEwan College, DeVry Institute of Technology-Calgary, Concordia University College of Alberta, Mount Royal College, Red Deer College, NAIT, SAIT, St. Stephen's College, University of Calgary and University of Lethbridge, meetings have taken place with the following:

- The Honourable David Hancock, Minister of Advanced Education, his Executive Assistant Betty Ann Hicks, Deputy Minister Dr. Bill Byrne, and Assistant Deputy Minister Phil Gougeon;
- Vice Presidents Academic of universities;
- Senior Academic Officers of the colleges and technical institutes;
- Council of Presidents of the colleges and technical institutes;

- Presidents and Vice Presidents Academic of the private colleges offering degree programs;
- Student association representatives;
- Confederation of Alberta Faculty Associations (CAFA);
- Alberta Colleges & Institutes Faculties Association (ACIFA);
- Peter Adams, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

In addition, it is vitally important that Council's work be recognized and understood outside the province. The Chair of the Council has been in contact with the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) and Ontario's Postsecondary Education Quality Assessment Board (PEQAB). As well, Council participated in a consultation on organizational and program assessment standards and processes which might be used when governments make decisions with respect to new degree programs and new degree providers in Canada. The consultation is part of the work of the Committee on the Quality of Degree Programs in Canada. The Committee, which was established by the Advisory Committee of Deputy Ministers of Education (ACDME) and is chaired by the Council's Secretariat Director, expects to report to ACDME in Fall 2005 with its recommendations regarding the possibility of a pan-Canadian approach to quality assurance of degree programs.

### *Evaluations and Recommendations*

The normal process of approval for degree programs being proposed follows the following course: application to the Minister, system coordination review by the Department, referral to the Council for organizational review and program quality review, Council's recommendation to the Minister, and decision by government with respect to approval of the program. For mature institutions that have experience in offering degree programs at the level of the degree being proposed, an expedited review may be possible. As of 31 March 2005, the Minister had referred the following applications to the Council:

- 4-year Bachelor of Arts in Child and Youth Care – Grant MacEwan College;
- 4-year Bachelor of Arts with majors in Anthropology, Economics, English, History, Philosophy, Political Science, Psychology, Sociology and Classical Studies – Grant MacEwan College;
- Master of Management in Information Systems Security - Concordia University College of Alberta.

Outlined below is the status of these applications as of 31 March 2005:

- Grant MacEwan College – As the College was proposing several baccalaureate degrees which were precedent-setting for the institution, Council hired an organizational evaluation team to review the self-study information presented by MacEwan, conduct a site visit and prepare a report. The report and the College's response to it were considered at Council's December and February meetings.
- Grant MacEwan College (4-yr BA in 9 majors) – This proposal was received at the end of February 2005. Council has engaged a program evaluation team which will visit the College in April.
- Grant MacEwan College (4-yr BA in Child and Youth Care) – Once the assessment of the College's readiness to offer this program was confirmed, a program evaluation team was formed and its site visit took

place on 22 March 2005. The team's report and College's response to it are expected to be discussed in May.

- Concordia University College of Alberta (Master of Management in Information Systems Security) – As the proposed program is for a first graduate program, Council determined that a focused organizational evaluation was required. Once Council established its organizational assessment standards for graduate programs, it selected a reviewer who will meet with Concordia's officials during a site visit in April.

# 3. Membership of the Council

The Council consists of eleven members appointed by the Minister of Learning (now the Minister of Advanced Education), including a chair and 10 additional members representing expertise in the post-secondary system (see Appendix 3). The services of a Secretariat Director, as well as other Secretariat staff are provided to the Council by the Minister.

During the reporting period, the following individuals have served the Council.

***Chair***

Doug Owram

***Members***

Michael Faulkner
Dan Gaynor
Dianne Kieren
Garry McKinnon
Peter Meekison
Adel Sedra (until February 2005)
Cliff Soper
Lucille Walter
Keith Ward
Mo Watanabe

## *Council's Code of Conduct*

The Council adopted a Code of Conduct for its members and all its evaluators. The Code addresses the participation of Council members and its evaluators in issues that may be perceived as being in a conflict of interest. It is intended to provide guidance for members to ensure all of their activities are carried out in a professional and ethical manner.

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# 4. Other Activities of the Council

## *Evaluation Teams*

As noted in Council's third operating principle, peer evaluation forms the basis of Council's review of the applicant's ability to mount and sustain degree programs (organizational evaluation) and the quality of the proposed programs (program evaluation). It therefore normally engages the services of experts to help with its evaluations. Depending on the circumstance, the Council employs three types of teams in evaluating programs and monitoring approved degree programs:

- *Organizational evaluation teams* assist the Council in examining the extent to which the systems and processes of the institution are clearly established to achieve excellence in learning.
- *Program evaluation teams* help ensure that degree programs offered by institutions are of an acceptably high quality, and comparable in quality to other degree programs in Alberta and Canada.
- *Comprehensive evaluation teams* will be used to help fulfill the Council's obligation with respect to periodic evaluations of institutions offering approved degree programs.

All evaluation teams are thoroughly prepared by the Secretariat. Teams have an orientation meeting with the Chair and Secretariat staff prior to their site visit, and are provided with a comprehensive binder outlining their roles and responsibilities and the assessment standards to be used, and detailed information about the proposed program and/or the institution. Once the report is received, team members are asked to provide feedback about their experience and offer suggestions for improving the review process.

Evaluators are typically academics and administrators from universities or institutions with accredited or approved degree programs in Alberta or elsewhere in Canada. The final decisions on all matters relating to an evaluation team rest with the Council, including the team's membership and its terms of reference.

## *Monitoring and Periodic Review*

The *Approval of Programs of Study Regulation* also outlines Council's responsibilities with respect to monitoring of approved new degrees. Should it determine that the institution no longer meets the required organizational conditions or that the approved program no longer meets required standards of quality, the Council may recommend that approval be discontinued. As Council has assumed the monitoring role for the existing degree programs approved under the PCAB process, as an interim measure, Council decided to ask the institutions offering PCAB-accredited degree programs to submit an annual report for the 2003-04 academic year following PCAB instructions for such reporting. Council dealt with those annual reports at its December 2004 meeting. Council is continuing to assess the amount of annual monitoring that should be required and for how long monitoring is needed.

A second type of monitoring involves periodic review. In December 2004, Council decided that institutions should undergo a comprehensive evaluation five years from the time of initial degree granting approval.

Council continues to assess its procedures with respect to both monitoring and comprehensive evaluations.

## 5. CAQC's Web Site

As a means of communicating with its stakeholders and members of the public, the Council has developed its presence on the Internet. The site includes information about the Council, the application process for new degree proposals, its assessment standards and links to relevant legislation and related organizations.

As the table below indicates, activity on the CAQC site (www.caqc.gov.ab.ca) has been brisk during the first three months of its existence. The number of visits and the number of unique visitors to the site has increased each month during the first quarter of 2005.

| | January 2005 | February 2005 | March 2005 | First Quarter 2005 |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Total # of visits during reporting period | 451 | 1058 | 1144 | 2653 |
| Total # of unique visitors during reporting period | 176 | 265 | 268 | 709 |

## 6. Administration

The Secretariat assists the Chair and the Council in their activities by providing advice on matters of policy and procedure, organizing meetings, helping to set meeting agendas, and preparing publications. It also provides information in response to inquiries from various agencies, current and prospective applicants, and members of the public about matters related to quality assurance of new degree programs. As well, it coordinates all aspects with respect to Council's external evaluation teams and the Secretariat's Director or delegate typically serves as an advisory member on the teams.

As a branch of Alberta Advanced Education, members of the Secretariat also participated in various intradepartmental committees and meetings.

As of March 2005, the Secretariat consists of:

- Marilyn Patton, Director
- Guy Germain, Manager
- Kathy Selk, Office Manager

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# 7. Next Steps

The Council's initial year has been both busy and productive. There is no indication that the activity will slow down in the coming year. Indeed, the range and rate of referrals is expected to increase.

During the next year, Council will finalize its program assessment standards and guidelines for reviewing graduate programs. As well, it will define its processes, role and requirements with respect to approval of non-resident degree programs and monitoring of all approved degree programs.

Council would like to emphasize the tremendous support provided by the Secretariat over the past year. Initially, the considerable requirements of the CAQC were in addition to the support already provided by the Secretariat to the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT). As trying to support both organizations was proving to be overwhelming, support for ACAT was transferred to another branch of the department. Although the transfer has certainly helped, given the increased scope of CAQC activities and the number of anticipated proposals in the near future, additional resources will likely be required to enable Council to fulfill its mandate.

# Appendix 1

## Publications of the Campus Alberta Quality Council

***A Guide for Teams Conducting Evaluations of Proposed Programs***

The guide provides information for external evaluation teams with respect to their role and responsibility when evaluating proposed programs. The "Framework for Program Evaluations" is included. Before each program evaluation, the guide is reviewed and updated as needed.

***A Guide for Teams Conducting Organizational Evaluations***

The guide provides information for external evaluation teams with respect to their role and responsibility when conducting organizational evaluations of first-time applicants. The "Framework for Organizational Evaluations" is included. The guide is reviewed before each organizational evaluation and updated as needed.

# Appendix 2

## Campus Alberta Quality Council
## Key Operating Principles

**Principle 1** – The Council **standards** are appropriate to the program level/scope and are comparable to national and international standards. Within this context, Council is open to flexibility and innovation in degree programming.

**Principle 2** – The Council respects the foundational role of **academic freedom** in the provision of high quality post secondary programs.

**Principle 3** – **Peer evaluation** forms the basis for the Council's evaluation of post-secondary degree programs.

**Principle 4** – **Stakeholder participation** is an integral part of the degree appraisal process.

**Principle 5** – The Council acts to develop and retain **autonomy** from influences that may undermine or otherwise affect trust in its functions and decisions.

**Principle 6** – The Council exhibits **equity** in all aspects of its operation. Equity encompasses the idea that applicants are treated fairly but not necessarily identically.

**Principle 7** – The Council operates at an appropriate level of **transparency** with respect to its processes, assessment standards and recommendations.

**Principle 8** – The Council acts **expeditiously** so that natural justice is achieved.

**Principle 9** – The Council exhibits and promotes **openness** in its practices and policies, including those related to reporting, accountability and appeal. In its commitment to consistency of decision making, the Council aims to develop public trust that all eligible institutions meeting the Council's standards and practices will be able to apply and take part fully in the functioning of the Council under its mandate, administration and processes.

**Principle 10** – Processes established by the Council are considered **developmental** in nature. This means that the Council's decisions and judgments have the potential for continuous development and improvement of institutional degree programs.

**Principle 11** – The Council is committed to the **quality assurance review** of its own activities through internal quality improvement and through the interprovincial sharing of best practices in post-secondary degree program quality assessment.

**Principle 12** – The Council exhibits and promotes **appreciation of institutional differences** and respect for institutional autonomy and integrity among the institutions proposing degree programs.

**Principle 13** – The Council ensures that approved degree programs and Council decisions with respect to them are **monitored** and the extent of monitoring is appropriate to the experience of the institution.

# Appendix 3

## Campus Alberta Quality Council
## Member information

**Dr. Doug Owram** is a professor and ex-Provost and Vice-President Academic at the University of Alberta. Dr. Owram has held several provincial and national committee positions.

**Michael D. Faulkner** is the retired Vice-President, Academic at Fairview College, has been a vice-president with various colleges in Alberta, and has worked with Alberta Treasury.

**Dan Gaynor** is the retired president and publisher of The Calgary Herald and has extensive experience in committee membership and leadership development.

**Dr. Dianne K. Kieren** is a Professor Emeritus and former Associate Vice-President Academic at the University of Alberta, outgoing chair of the Private Colleges Accreditation Board (PCAB) and a member of a number of other related committees, including the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT).

**Dr. D. Garry McKinnon** is the retired Superintendent of Golden Hills School District, a sessional instructor at the Universities of Calgary and Lethbridge, and has served on several committees relating to the development of education opportunities.

**Dr. J. Peter Meekison** is a former chair of both the departments of law and political science, previous Vice-President Academic at the University of Alberta and adjunct professor at the University of Victoria. Dr. Meekison has played a key role in many provincial, national and international committees.

**Dr. Adel Sedra** is the Dean of Engineering at the University of Waterloo and the previous Vice-President, Provost and Chief Academic Officer at the University of Toronto. In addition Dr. Sedra serves on a number of federal committees.

**Dr. Cliff Soper** is a retired Professor of St. Xavier University, instructor at Red Deer College and a county councillor.

**Lucille Walter** is Chair of the Alberta Council on Admissions and Transfer (ACAT), member of Region Six Children's Services Authority Board, retired teacher and councillor, and former executive member of the University of Alberta Alumni and Senate.

**Dr. S. Keith Ward** is the retired Vice-President, Academic of The King's University College, a previous member of PCAB and ACAT, and a member of a number of other committees.

**Dr. Mamoru (Mo) Watanabe** is Emeritus Professor of Medicine at the University of Calgary, former Dean of the Faculty of Medicine, and chair of several provincial and national health and research committees.